Easy import of sugar, pulses and wheat

2749. SHRIMATI SHOBHANA BHARTIA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the rise in prices of essential commodities has compelled Government to facilitate easy import of sugar, pulses and wheat in a bid to keep prices under check;

(b) if so, whether Government are planning to institute a tariff quota regime, to facilitate import of sugar against lower duty, eliminate import duty on pulses and enable easy import of wheat;

(c) if so, whether the Ministry's proposal has been accepted; and

(d) to what extent these measures have helped in checking the rise in prices of essential commodities?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) to (d) The prices of certian essential commodities such as wheat, sugar and pulses registered an upward trend during the past few months. Thus, to ensure adequate availability of these commodities at reasonable prices, the Government has taken the following measures:

(1) Export of sugar and pulses have been prohibited for a period upto 31.3.2007.

(2) Improt duty on pulses have been reduced to zero per cent for the period upto 31.3.2007.

(3) Import duty on sugar have been brought down to zero per cent on imports made upto the period 30.9.2006.

(4) Import of wheat in the country was earlier allowed only through Food Corporation of India. This condition has been relaxed and import of the commodity has now been perimitted freely by private importers upto the period 31.12.2006.

(5) Duty on wheat imports by private importers has been reduced to five per cent.

Measures taken to restrict exports, permit imports with relaxed conditions and at lower duty rates are likely to improve the domestic availability of these commodities.